

SEEKER

A

# S E R M O N

Preached before the Right Honourable the

L O R D - M A Y O R,

T H E

Court of ALDERMEN,

T H E

S H E R I F F S,

A N D T H E

G O V E R N O R S of the several  
Hospitals of the City of *London*,

A T T H E

P a r i s h - C h u r c h of St. BRIDGET,

O N

M O N D A Y in *Easter-Week*, 1738.

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By THOMAS Lord Bishop of OXFORD.

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L O N D O N:

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VI O M A R T

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## Barnard, Mayor.

Tuesday, the 11th Day of April, 1738,  
and in the Eleventh Year of the  
Reign of King George the Second,  
of Great-Britain, &c.

**I**T is Ordered, That the Thanks of this  
Court be given to the Right Reverend  
Father in God, the Lord Bishop of Oxford,  
for his Sermon preached before this Court,  
and the Governors of the several Hospitals  
of this City, at the Parish-Church of St.  
*Briget*, on Monday in Easter-Week last,  
and that he be desired to print the same.

M A N.



I PET. iv. 10.

*As every Man hath received the Gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good Stewards of the manifold Grace of God.*



HE Inducements we have, to relieve the Miseries, and promote the Good of our Fellow-Creatures, are, God be thanked, both many in Number, and of various Kinds. Our Hearts naturally incline us to it: Our Reason approves of it as right. The more benevolent Disposition we are of, the truer Peace we have within; and the greater Capacity of social Happiness, the sweetest Part of the Enjoyment of Life. Willingness to do good, is always rewarded with the Esteem of Mankind; and Selfishness of Temper, the constant Object of every one's Aversion. We

have frequent Experience in ourselves, what Suffering is: And are therefore inexcusable, if we overlook it in others. We live in a World, where, were it not for the Exercise of Mercy and Pity, the Face of Things would look dreadful with miserable Objects; and the Multitudes of Persons driven to Despair, make Society unsafe. Besides, we know the Vicissitudes of human Affairs: And are nearly concerned, to encourage by our Example that Spirit of Goodness and Compassion; which We or Ours may, on one Occasion or other, easily come to have great need of.

These are powerful Motives to Beneficence: And yet the Influence of them is too commonly exceeding small. The Hearts of some Persons have but little Sensibility: and those of others, a very confined and partial one. Some content themselves with talking of Benevolence, instead of cultivating it; or with the inward feeling of good Affections, instead of exerting them: And others give Scope to their wrong Inclinations, and their right ones, promiscuously; and so easily do more Harm in the World, than Good. Speculative Reasonings but few Persons attend to: and fewer still are governed by them in Practice. Their Liableness to the common Accidents of Life, Men either forget amidst the Pleasures of it; or turn into an Argument, for attending the more closely to their own Interests. As for Reputation; a few Acts of Goodness, well managed, will obtain as much of it as they are

con-

concerned about. Or, if they cannot be esteemed; they may hope at least to be courted. And even if they fail of this; they can affect to despise it, and appear, notwithstanding, happy: Some in their Wealth, some in their Voluptuousness.

Our wise and good Maker hath therefore not left us to the Influence of these Motives only: But, as he saw it necessary, that in all our Ways we should be directed by Regard to Him; so he hath added infinite Force to the abovementioned Considerations, by giving us the Knowledge of Himself, and teaching us to look on them as Evidences of his Will. He undoubtedly designed the good Things of this World, not for the Gratification of a few of his Creatures; but for the Benefit of all. And he hath divided them unequally amongst us; not that one part of the human Race should sink under Misery and Want, and the other look down with Contempt upon them: But that Pity and Gratitude should be mutually exercised, and the Pleasure of doing and receiving good, felt among Men: That the Poor should be serviceable to the Rich; they, in return, kind to the Poor; and Both united in the Bonds of mutual Good-will, from a Sense of their mutual Dependency. These, it appears from the Knowledge we have of his Nature, must have been his Intentions. The same Thing appears farther from the Nature he hath given Us, and the Circumstances he hath placed us in. And that no Sort of Evidence of it might be wanting

wanting, he hath made known to the World his Pleasure by express Revelation also: Requiring of Heb. xiii. 16. us all *to do good, and to communicate*, both as we are Servants, bound in every Thing to obey him; and as we are Stewards, appointed and intrusted by him for this very Purpose.

Let us therefore consider, with the Seriousness we ought,

I. What general Influence it should have upon us, that we are *Stewards of the manifold Grace of God.*

II. What Influence in particular with respect to those Methods of Charity, which are the Occasion of our present Meeting.

I. Let us consider the general Influence. Every Thing God hath done for the Good of his Creatures, is *Grace* or Favour to them: And every Thing he has placed in our Hands for their Good, is Grace of which we are Stewards. All the Means and Opportunities we have, of making the World, or any Part of it, better or happier; by our Knowledge or Wealth, by our Power or Interest, our Care or Pains, our friendly Behaviour or good Example; are given us in Trust, to be so exercised. How *manifold* these are, upon the Whole, is not perhaps easy for us, to be fully sensible: But we should each of us think very carefully, what his own Share of them is,

is, and wherein it consists. For no one is without his *Talent*, though some have more committed to them than others: and they who have least, will be expected to improve what they have; as our Matth. xxv.  
Saviour's Parable very awfully shews. The poorest <sup>14.—30.</sup> Person in the World, is capable of being useful, some Way or other, to his Fellow-Creatures: And the greatest can never be above the Obligation, of imitating, to their Power, the Beneficence of their Creator. They who are engaged in Business, far from having their Attention confined to themselves, have usually, by that very Means, peculiar Advantages both for knowing and supplying the Wants of others. And such as have no particular Employment, have only the Privilege of a freer Choice, what Part they will take in that general one assigned to us all, of doing good.

Since then we are appointed, each in his proper Station, Dispensers and *Stewards of the manifold Grace of God*; it concerns us to behave as faithful ones: Not to intercept the Streams of the Divine Bounty; nor confine to our own Gratification, what our Maker hath designed for the common Benefit of all around us. He hath not indeed fixed the Proportions of any Kind of Charity: For Circumstances vary so infinitely, that general Rules concerning such Matters are impossible. And this Latitude should not give Anxiety to any good Mind: for we serve a most equitable Master. But neither should it give Encouragement to bad Minds; and make

make them imagine, that where nothing is ascertained, they may do just as little as they please. For God will expect from every one, what may be reasonably expected from them: and hath left this Matter at large, not that we may shew our Backwardness to serve him, but our Zeal. Imprudent Zeal he never approves: But Goodness, confined within the Bounds of Discretion, is always more acceptable to him, in Proportion, as it is more abundant. And, though not every Failure in Degree shall expose us to Punishment; yet *he which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.*

Matth. xxv. 26. However unactive therefore we may naturally be; yet, as Persons intrusted by the Lord of all, it imports us greatly to be diligent. For Industry is a valuable Part of Faithfulness: and *lothful Servants* will be considered in the Day of Judgment as *wicked ones*. Some Ways of doing good may possibly be less pleasing to us: Some Persons our Prejudices, our Passions or Interests, would tempt us to overlook, rather than serve: And some Things, that are only seeming Instances of Benevolence, we should be willing to mistake for real ones; and indulge a false good Nature, without Regard to Consequences, however bad. But when we consider, that in all these Cases we are to act for God; this makes a very great Change in the View of Things: And may both oblige us at some Times *to do with our*

our *Might*, what perhaps we could least have wished ; and restrain us, at others, from doing at all, what injudiciously we should have been the fondest of. Another important Use of looking upon ourselves in this Light, is, that how great soever our Talents may be, and how right soever the Use we make of them ; it must still be the strongest Reason possible for Humility, one of the most excellent of Virtues, to think, that all we have is given us, and all we do is but *ministring*. Then, at the same Time that our being intrusted will teach us these Things, our being jointly intrusted will teach us another : Never to invade each other's Province, nor *stretch ourselves beyond our Measure* ; but as God hath distributed to every Man, 1 Cor. vii. 17. *so to walk* : For he is not the Author of Confusion, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. *but of Peace*. God is the Judge, and a much better surely than we, what Employment is fittest for each of his Servants : And how enterprizing soever any of us may be now, or how discontented soever with the Narrowness of our own Sphere of Action ; we may have Cause enough to be glad at last, that no more was committed to our Care. Yet these Reflexions must not be carried to such a Length, as to let the Business of our common Master suffer, under Pretence of its belonging, not to us, but our Fellow-Servant ; when there is no Impropriety, but only somewhat more Labour or Expence, in stepping a little out of our Way, to prevent the ill Consequences of another's Neglect. It must be

owned a difficult Matter, not to mistake in these Cases on one Side or other: But involuntary Mistakes will never be imputed to us. It must be owned a very serious Thing, to be Stewards of God: But it is a very noble one, to be employed under our heavenly Father in the Work he delights in most; and for the Happiness of our Brethren, perhaps to all Eternity. If indeed we are found

Matth. xxv. instead of this, either hiding the Talents committed  
18.

Luke xvi. 1. to us, or wasting our Master's Goods, or misusing

Matth. xxiv. those to whom we ought to have ministered; then

49. miserable will our Condition be, when God shall

Luke xvi. 2. say to us, *Give an Account of thy Stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer Steward.* But on the

other hand our Comfort is, that a sincere Endeavour to discharge our Office as we ought, whatever our Difficulties, or whatever our Imperfections be,

Matth. xxv. shall intitle us to the Sentence, *Well done good and*

23. *faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

With the Impression therefore of these Reflections upon our Minds, let us now proceed to inquire

II. What Influence the Thought, that we are *Stewards of the manifold Grace of God*, should have upon us, with respect to those particular Methods of doing good, which are the Occasion of our present meeting.

Now these are of three Sorts, which indeed comprehend almost the whole of publick Charity:

Places

Places of Maintenance and Instruction for Children; Hospitals for the Sick; and Houses of Correction and Work for the dissolute and idle.

Relieving poor Parents from the Burden of a Family they are not able to support, must needs be a most welcome Charity to Them; and is evidently a very useful one to the Publick: for it tends to the future Increase of the Community, as well as to make the present Members of it happy. And teaching poor Children Religion and Virtue, one should think were plainly a beneficial Thing too. For let it prove ineffectual as often as it will; they must be a little more likely to abstain from what is wrong, for being taught what is right. Some Principles, some Notions of Life and Behaviour, they will learn: Which then would you have them learn, good or bad? They may indeed possibly learn bad Things mixed with good, under the Notion of Religion. But considering the Purity Religion is professed in amongst us, there cannot well be much of this Kind; and there needs not be any Thing. Some Persons, however, appear to have great Fears of Superstition: and no Fears of any Thing else. But do they really find in fact, that this is the reigning and dangerous Error of the present Age? Is it with Superstition, that your Servants, and your Children as they grow up, and the Generality of the People, are infected? or is it not with Profligateness: Such open and avowed Contempt of the Laws of God and Man, of all

Sobriety and Order, as this Nation hath never known before, and cannot long subsist under the Increase of? But if you are in Earnest afraid of Superstition ; be afraid where you have Cause of Fear. There is a real, and a dreadful Superstition gaining Ground, that of the Church of *Rome*. And the more ignorant Men are of all Religion, and the more prejudiced against their own Form and their own Teachers of Religion ; the more easily they are won over into that most corrupt and formidable Communion. And think, I intreat you, What would our Condition be ; should ever the main Part of this Nation become, one half Papists, and the other Profligates ! For as to the Scheme, of Virtue without Religion : even if it could be put in Practice, yet there is a God, and he ought to be feared ; and there is a Support in Piety, which Mankind ought not to be deprived of. But whoever knows any Thing of the World, must see, that such a Scheme can never be put in Practice : that human Nature hath daily need, both to be restrained from Evil and excited to Good, in Cases where none but religious Motives can do either effectually. And as these have been constantly found necessary, in all Ages and Countries whatever : so they are certainly of the most indispensable Necessity, where Incentives to Vice are in the greatest abundance, and Liberty is the least controlled by Law.

But

Matthew. XI. 28.

Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

These words were spoken by our blessed Saviour, and contain in them these particulars for the subject of w<sup>t</sup>. you'll find in the following Discourse.

First. The call, or invitation, come unto me.  
Secondly. The persons called, they that labour and are heavy laden.  
Thirdly. The reward & entertainment, and I will give you rest.

To the first particular, there is no occasion to insist much upon it; being an act of civility which we scruple not to perform to any one; no one that is called to his familiar & equal, will refuse to come, unless detained by business of extraordinary haste & consequence; such loss will he refuse to come, who called his Superior, his Prince or his Master; and doubt not but we believe our Saviour takes this & much more to us. Now this coming Christ is not to be understood as a long tedious Pilgrimage, the compassing of Sea & Land, or <sup>the</sup> painful search thro' all the corners of Earth. The coming to Christ must be another kind of address of the soul & heart, believing & receiving him: for those three words comprise the self-same thing in scripture. Thus it is said, He came to his own & his own received him not; but as many as receiv'd him, to them gave

he power to become Sons of God, even so as many  
as believe on his name. The like says of the  
words we may observe, where our Saviour  
tells the unbelieving Jews, Ye will not come  
unto me that ye might have life; again Jesus  
said unto them, I am the Bread of life; he  
that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and  
he that believeth on me, shall never thirst.  
But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me,  
and believe not. All that the Fa.<sup>r</sup> giveth me,  
shall come to me; and him that cometh to me,  
I will in no wise cast out. It is with an  
active faith to acknowledge him the Lord of  
our Lives & the guide of our actions, with  
full embraces to receive his Laws & Statutes,  
and with all Readiness & cheerfulness to obey  
his Will. Thus we see the coming to Christ is  
not the flattery of the Tongue, nor the crying  
Lord, Lord; nor saying, Hail Master! for Judas  
who betray'd him did this: nor further is it  
the assent of the understanding to the Truths  
of the Gospel; for even the Devils themselves  
believe & tremble. How miserably therefore  
do they deceive their own souls, who think  
that this duty of coming to Christ is only a  
matter of Science & speculation, that an  
impudent presumption & reliance on the  
mercies of God, that a strong Imagination  
of an Interest with Christ will bring them to  
Heaven! Be not deceived; Christianity is not  
a Dream, a Fancy, but a real warfare; a  
warfare,

worlde wherein we are to fight against our selves  
to beat down our bodies, and bring them to  
subjection; to fight not only against flesh &  
blood, but against principalities & powers, against  
spiritual wickedness in high places. Heaven  
is not a place to receive corruption or uncleanness;  
he that will be a saint above, must be such  
ones; and vainly doth he expect to be a member  
of the church triumphant, that never serv'd  
& laboured in the militant or entertrain  
tours of receiving the prize, that ran not in the  
race, or of dividing the spoil, that fought not  
in the battle. Would we come to Christ? it is  
but be thro' difficult & opposition, through a  
sea of trouble & of danger; nay if it be his  
blessed will, through a sea of our own blood.  
thus is he, the Captain of our salvation, gone  
before, and thus he respects that we shd follow  
him: On those terms is his invitation grounded,  
me unto me all ye that labour & are heavy  
laden, & I will give you rest. Which leads  
the second Particular, The Persons called, or  
whom the invitation is sent, They that labour  
and are heavy laden. Our Saviour calls  
not to his feast the wealthy purchaser,  
he hath bought a farm & must go & see it;  
& the trafficking dealer of this world, for  
he hath bought goods of breed & must go &  
see them: but he calls the poor & grieved,  
the halt & the blind; the searchers for justice in

the highways & hedges; these he compels to  
come to his support. But may it not seem  
a very strange command to bid them that labour  
come to him; people much fitter for quiet & repose?  
may not this seem rather a scoff than an  
invitation signifying no more than this; if  
the weary traveller that is not able to move  
a step forward, may go to his Inn; if the overladen  
slave that is not able to stand beneath his burden  
can bear it to the place appointed to lay it down;  
then may you find rest to go souls; according  
to the prophet Jeremy, who says, can the Ethiopian  
change his skin, or the Leopard his spots?  
then may ye also do good that are accustomed  
to do evil. But however God in his jealousy  
and just indignation against sin, may sometimes  
as it is expressed in the book of Proverbs, laugh  
at our calamity & mock when our fear cometh  
yet when he speaks to us in his Son, he cannot  
then forget the bowels of a Father, or look upon  
our misery, without a tender & compassionate  
regard to it. That faithful & merciful high  
priest, who vouchsafed to be tempted in all  
points as we are yet without sin, cannot but  
be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.  
Therefore may we safely apply to ourselves the  
encouragement given to the blind man: Be  
of good cheer, for he calleth us: Nor need we  
wonder at the strangeness of the fall; if  
he that can make the lame to walk, that  
commanded Lazarus to come forth out of his Tomb,

who was bound hands & feet with Gowers loath  
and more than that, fetter'd in the Chaine of  
Death; he that can give life & motion to rotting  
and make the Silence of Death answer to his  
voice; he that can do these things & much more,  
can surely with his call, enable the sickly fair  
Passenger to arise & come to him, the weary  
to run his course like a giant i'f p'shed with  
Wine, and the heavy-laden to bear his burden.  
But that we may more distinctly know those  
designed & aim'd it in this call, we must  
remember that sin is express'd in scripture  
under the notion of a load or burden. Thus  
the Royal Prophet complains, my Iniquities  
have gone over my head, and as a weighty burden,  
they are too heavy for me. And very justly is  
sin intitl'd to that name; for it is a weight  
so vast & heavy, that it can sink us down, both  
soul & body, into the lowest Chambers of the  
bottomless Pit; it is a servitude so full of toil,  
is very weary-some, that every sinner seems  
to have begun his Hell upon Earth, and to be  
unished for his wickedness whilst he committeth  
it; he is a slave to as many Tyrants, as he  
 hath members, thoughts & Passions; he is laden  
with Impurity, with vanity, with malice, and  
overwhelmed with the Terrors of an affrighted  
conscience; he is consumed with envy, sedon  
ing by lust, rent asunder with faction & discord,  
disturbed with anger, & disordered by a whole  
body of Sin & Death. Yet so deplorable,

To miserable an object as this doth the compass  
of god delight to behold & pity; he graciously  
removes this child of darkness from the  
precipice & brink of ruin & destruction,  
thereby to transform him to an angel of light,  
that where sin hath most abounded, grace  
hath much more abound.

But to be a sinner is not a sufficient title to  
these movies; there is then this further  
requisite, that we be weary eswold as heavy  
laders. To be weary then of our sins, is to  
nauseate & distaste them, earnestly desire to  
discharge thos. Drosses of that bitter leprosy  
with so much greediness we swallowed down  
to hate & abhor, to be vexed on our selves  
to be ashamed & confounded, because of the  
reproach of our youth. Yet further, we  
must be sorry, that all this, be no transient  
humour of hopelessness; for as our zeal  
never so hot, if it be not regular & equal,  
we must conclude it not to be our virtue,  
but disease, to be a fever & not religion.  
But if we bring a natural & lasting heat,  
if we are heartily sorry for our transgressions,  
if the remembrance of them is grievous, and  
the burden intolerable, we may lawfully claim to  
the promise of G. Jeochi, we may come boldly  
to our Sav<sup>r</sup>. & he will give us rest.

God's munificence is complete & end less as himself:  
Every good & perfect gift comes down from  
Him who is the Fa<sup>r</sup> of light in whom are no shadows  
or shades of turning.

Ihs,

The good he bestows on such as come to him, is  
entire constant & unchangeable. To the weary it  
is rest; to the heavy laden an exceeding and  
eternal weight of glory; to the sad it is mirth  
and comfort; to the hungry & thirsty it is a  
feast & banquet. The rest he gives is wide as  
eternity, comprehending our past, present, and  
future states. Those toilsome burdens, with  
the weight of which the mournful Penitent is  
humbled & brought low, our merciful Redemer  
engages to ease him of; the many grievous sins  
we have from Time to Time committed against  
the divine majesty, he graciously undertakes  
to cast behind us, to take away that hindrance  
which was against us, to blot out as a thick  
cloud our transgressions & as a cloud our sins,  
to make the spotted leprous sinner clean and  
pure, and render the defiled polluted one  
whiter than snow: to heal our wounded  
spirit, to refresh our soul with his comfort;  
in a word, to bestow upon us the peace of god  
in our consciences for his remission of our  
sins, that peace which passeth all understanding,  
which the world cannot give or take away.  
And what a calm must sit upon that soul which  
thus purged & purified, thus set at peace &  
dead from & weight of present ill, and the  
concerns, the shame & horrors of past.  
That tranquillity must fill his mind, who is in  
a happy situation! who lies down in his  
bed, & sleep is binding up his bones, with

what Satisfaction, with what complacency of  
Soul, doth he commend himself to the protection  
of the Fa[n]t[asy] of mercies, & God of all comfort,  
and w[ill] he arise up, what ravishing Joye, w[ill] t  
larmes of Heaven dwell upon his breast  
and crown each waking Thought!  
nor will those comforts leave us, but reach  
to our third Estate & attend us into the other  
world. But had we the Tongues of man  
and angels, the language of E[ver]y creature, how  
short would all our Historick appear, to  
express & transendent Joye of that next,  
which remains to the people of God, in the  
next life! This next is such a scene of  
Happiness, that the very thought of it is  
enough to overwhelm us. It is to have a soul  
refined & purified, not puzzled to guess at  
Truths, but enabled <sup>to</sup> pierce them at one  
view; to have a body no longer weighty, but  
all gay & bright; or in the Apostle's phrase,  
the cloathing of Immortality & Glory; to have  
so be all this, & infinitely more, to enjoy all  
the felicities of Heaven, the charity of that  
place deriving of whole good of all so dying out,  
and to make Partakers of the glorious Vision of  
God himself. This is next & quick unspeakable,  
unconceivable; to this our blessed Redeemer  
affectionately invites, without exception, all  
who are grieved, & troubled, & wearied with  
the burden of their sins; and assures <sup>&</sup> I am to  
such as come to him with a lively faith and  
sincere Repentance.

Wharfond,

Wherefore to conclude; let us gird up & loise  
of our minds, cast away living weight, and living  
sin wh. doth so easily best us: Let our  
lights be burning, & we ourselves prepared,  
prepared to meet the blessed Bridgeman  
prepared to come to him who is the way, the  
Truth & the life; He is the way to guide us,  
the Truth to give us light, and the bread of  
life to feed us: He is the way in example,  
for he hath given us an example, that we  
who follow his steps: He is the Truth in Promise,  
for his covenant he will not break, nor alter  
the thing that is gone out of his lips: He will  
not fail to give rest to weary & heavy laden  
who come to him; He is the life in reward,  
for tho' the wages of sin be death, yet the  
Gift of God is eternal life, thro' Jesus Christ our  
Lord. Let us make haste & delay not the time  
to come to him, let us but set forward, and our  
journey shall not be long & tedious; He has  
already vouchsafed to come to us, when we were  
great way off; The journey he took was of  
wide a distance as earth & heaven:  
He left the bosom of his eternal Father, the glory  
he had with him before the world was, to come to  
us, for us men & for our salvation. Let us  
not then be like those savage fedorines recorded  
in the gospel, that forced their Saviour to  
part their coast. W. n he calls, let us not  
lose, w. n he stretcheth out his hand let us regard  
at the great day of final retribution

W<sup>t</sup> the Son of man shall come in his Glory,  
all the Holy Angels with him, and he shall sit  
upon the Throne of his Glory, and all nations  
shall be gathered before him, & we may not  
be found in the number of those, who shall  
be set on his left hand, & instead of that  
loving Compellation, come unto me, I shall  
have that terrible Sentence of Eternal  
Condemnation pronounced upon them.

I know you not whence ye are; Depart from  
me, stand off, get you from me, without hope  
of ever seeing me again, all ye workers of  
Iniquity. That this may not be a dreadful  
case of any of us, let us readily obey this  
gracious, this happy Call, a Call to rest  
that neither eye can take from us, nor a as  
from it; a Rest, wh<sup>t</sup> Thieves & Violence shall  
not be able to break through & ravish  
from us.

To the Judgment of wch happy Place, of  
which glorious & eternal Rest, God of  
his infinite mercy bring us all, for the  
sake of his dear Son Jesus Christ, To  
whom with & for & the Holy Ghost, be ascribed  
all Honour & Praise, might, majesty and  
Dominion, now & for evermore amen.

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At the first Rationis 28 August - 43. St Barth<sup>t</sup> Fred-church  
Ludgate Chapel 4 Sept - 43. 2 March, 1714-5  
St Michael Royal Feb. 3-43. St Michael Royal 22d Au-  
gust 1699 - 66.  
Ludgate 1699 - 66. (Ch 5)

Psalm. LXXXIX. 48.

What man is he that liveth, and shall  
not see Death? Shall he deliver his soul  
from the hand of the grave?

Every individual Person, without limitation  
& exception, is strictly and properly concerned  
in the present Subject of Discourse.  
that is, evry man shall die, as certain as  
he now liveth; nor is it in the power of any  
mortal, to secure & defend himself from  
the power of the grave.

Although you're sensibly convinced of, and  
establish'd in this great, important Truth, yet  
is it necessary to stir you up, by putting you in  
remembrance of it, to awaken y<sup>r</sup> attention,  
to persuade you to consider y<sup>r</sup> latter end, and to  
lay before you what Influence the certainty of  
Death ought to have upon the management  
and conduct of y<sup>r</sup> whole Lives.

If we take a Survey of this life, we shall  
find it exposed to as many Dangers, as there  
are either things or accidents in the wide  
universe. We see ourselves, not only by  
our Nature & Constitution subject to  
varieties of Disasters, but evry thing without  
us, nay those very things without w<sup>e</sup>, we can by

by no means subsist, on frequent occasions  
of our dissolution: The Air we breathe, and which  
we so necessarily use for the maintenance of the  
vital Flame, blasted with an unwholesome  
vapour, infects with plagues & pestilential  
diseases: Fire & water, those most useful  
instruments of life, how often are they the  
unhappy messengers of Death! Besides the  
events of these, I might add the numerous  
accidents arising from different causes, from  
Heat & Cold, from Rest & Labour, from  
Sleep & watching: It were endless to recite  
the many roads & passages to Death, wh.  
are all wide & open, and passed through  
in a moment's space. Surely therefore it  
will become us to exercise our minds in  
the contemplation of a matter which in  
itself is all so nearly concerned, and previously lay  
it to heart. — But I know not how it  
comes to pass, (So it is) there is a second pride,  
a root of vanity, & self-hood in our breasts,  
that would persuade us to think ourselves  
something extraordinary, nor suffering us to  
dwelt upon & melancholy theme of Death.  
But whether men will hear, or whether  
they will forbear, it hath pleased Almighty  
God so to order the matter, that the whole  
creation proclaims this great, important truth:  
If we look up to the heavens, we shall see  
the Sun, issuing from the womb of the morning, setting  
within a space of a few hours; and this comp-

comfortable light, which now encircles round us,  
will be buried soon in the grave of darkness.  
Look we on Earth, the grass & herbs before us; how  
soon do they dry up & wither! Nay, how seldom  
do they stay out that time, but either some hand  
crops or mows them down, some Beast feeds  
or some Foot tramples upon them! The very  
harmonies with which we cloath our Bodies, are  
lively Emblems of our mortality, and daily put  
us in mind of our grave cloaths; and what is  
sleep itself but a warmer kind of death; wherein  
both one asleep differ from one deceas'd but that  
the next morning he is nearer his Resurrection  
yet this representation of our Death we have  
before us in our own Person every night.  
But now transfer y<sup>r</sup> thoughts to your fellow  
creatures, men: W<sup>t</sup> you see or hear of any of  
them being seiz'd by Death, can you be so destitute  
of understanding, so void of sense as not to be  
concern'd? Were you in a besieged Town or  
in the field before the enemy, and one of  
you who see the most man to him shot dead  
before him, would he not be startled at the  
accident, as considering, that the same  
instrument of Death, might as well have  
done the same execution upon himself?  
again, were there out of this congregation  
one assembled, one or two to be condemned  
present Death, perhaps within the space of  
two or three days, and was this choice to be  
made without any respect had to Persons of  
quality, age, youth or Sex, so that none could

possibly guess at the parties to be taken hold on—  
but every one might as justly imagine himself and  
as any other: Were we now in this condition,  
w<sup>t</sup> apprehensions, think you, shd we have, w<sup>t</sup>  
sad fears w<sup>t</sup> beset us, what cold suspicions,  
that each of us were the unfortunate Gordon on  
whom the fatal lot w<sup>t</sup>ould fall? To speak the  
Truth plainly; we are all now in this condition,  
however or it comes to pass that we think not  
of it; for we all stand in the presence of Almighty  
God, with whom there is no respect of Persons,  
in whose hands is the Breath of all things living,  
to dispose of it according to no other Rule,  
than that of his uncontrollable Power and  
infinite wisdom. Seeing then that Life  
which we so highly prize, and so dearly love,  
is surrounded with such dangers & uncertainties,  
what other course shall we take, but that  
of managing & employing the remainder of  
it to the best advantage, and taking occasion  
even from the shortness of it, to make it  
last to Eternity, and endure infinitely beyond  
the ages of our forefathers, whose Days were  
measured by seven or eight hundred years,  
soon to that age, to wch a thousand years  
are but as one single Day?

The Business therefore of the remaining part  
of this Discourse, shall be to lay before you, what  
influence the consideration of the certainty  
of our death ought to have on the whole  
management & conduct of our Lives;

and,

and that is, First, To lessen the value we are too apt  
to put upon ourselves, and moderate our affection  
for the things of this world. Secondly, to quick  
and stir us up in our preparations for the next.  
To pride themselves in youth, in Health, in Strength,  
in Beauty, in Superiority of Situation above others.  
This is the way of men, and this is their foolishness:  
For will their Health support it self beneath the  
pressure of the gout or stone? Will their Strength  
withstand the shock of a long Ague, or bear the  
siege of a Consumption? Is youth a preservative  
against the rage of a burning Fever? Is beauty  
a proof against Disease? Will the worms for ever  
fly from them? Will Death allow fairer Quarter  
to the mighty Monarch than to the meanest Subject?  
To the noble than to the ignoble? Will the pomp &  
glories of this world prolong the date of life  
no single moment? If none of all this be, (and  
let it be noted well know, & well would it be  
with us if we did duly & to purpose consider it)  
Death at its approach levels the Scepter with  
the glove, and leaves no difference in the bracketed  
beauties to distinguish them from the roughest  
& most unpolish'd creatures, if it over shadows all,  
high & low, strong & weak, young & old, in one  
uniform darkness, how surely is matter sufficient  
to humble the pride & mortify of vanity of man,  
and to make him say to corruption, Thou art  
my Father, and to the worm, Thou art my  
other & my Sister. Again, to mind earthly  
things, to live in pleasure & wantonness, and

make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof  
so project schemes & designs for many years to come,  
to trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in  
the multitude of their riches, These are frequent  
but fatal delusions of the sons of men.  
Nor have they consulted the book of fate and  
have discovered whole ages allotted 'em? will  
their great designs and laborious contrivances,  
secure them the privilege of a long life? will  
their wealth, even death <sup>strike</sup> pass them by, and let  
them go free? How evt God said to the rich man  
who w<sup>n</sup> ground brought forth plentifully, though  
within himself saying, what shall I do? because  
I have no room where to bestow my fruits?  
And he said, this will I do, I will pull down  
my barns & build greater, and there will I  
bestow all my fruits & my goods: And I will  
say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods  
laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat,  
drink, & be merry. How fondly did this  
mistaken man flatter himself in his own  
eyes, and please his heart with the prospect  
of many years of life, as many of pleasure  
and sensual enjoyments! But an unlook'd-for  
unthought-of accident broke in and spoiled  
his whole design; for God said to him, Thou  
fool, this night thy soul shall be required of  
thee. In that sad hour w<sup>n</sup> it shall please  
God to require their souls, how small will be  
the content & satisfaction of the voluptuous from  
the consideration of those delights in which they've  
spent their days, but must now leave 'em for ever!

How will they then be vexed with horrible fear,  
hang their minds, groan for anguish of spirit, and  
say within themselves, we have swerved from the way  
of Truth; we have woavised ourselves in the  
way of wickedness & destruction, and we have  
one tho' dangerous way, and have not known  
the way of the Lord. w<sup>t</sup> hath pride profited  
us? And w<sup>t</sup> good hath riches, with our vanity  
brought us. Therefore secondly, The Consideration  
of the Certainty of our Death, ought to quicken  
and stir us up in our Preparation for the next.  
It is, I fear, an equally certain & melancholy  
Truth, that many, w<sup>t</sup> they lie on the Bed of sickness  
or the Physician hath left 'em, & there remains  
no hope of life, then, in all haste, but not tell them,  
and for God's minister to fit them for Heaven:  
then, w<sup>t</sup> they are leaving the world & all they  
have therain, they seem to turn devoute on a sudden  
and set up for a ~~sinful~~ course of piety, as if Heaven  
were an hospitale design'd for decay'd worn-out  
livers, & might be had at any time for asking:  
Now their wealth & riches gived 'em no content  
they would by all means & all speed, be directed  
the way to Paradise, to the blessed mansions of  
the new Jerusalem; Now their appetite is lost  
and gone, they earnestly desire to be brought  
to the Supper of the Lamb, the eternal feast  
with Saints and Angels. There is none so  
roud & despreate a sinner, but w<sup>t</sup> faint die the  
death of the righteous, and have his latter  
end like his. W<sup>t</sup> the King of Terrors approached

him, run to the sick faintings of a weak & body,  
and added on one hand the passionate desire of life  
Death, and on the other the violent abhorrence of  
a Life divided between beauty & guilt, the  
fear of an impartial Judgment at the awful  
Tribunal of Christ, are every dissuasive from  
vice, every motive to virtue, every opportunity  
of doing good, and the obligations to it, which  
he slighted & rejected, shall stand as witnesses  
against him, then doth he begin to confess the  
madness of his former ways, and the desperate  
folly of his past life, and if a short respite  
had been granted him, vowed a strict & sacred  
reformation. But since man knoweth that this  
great change will one day come; since none  
can tell how soon it will come, why do they  
not provide against it? why do they not put  
themselves in a fit posture, ~~not~~ to avoid the  
woe of approaching Death, for that is out  
of their power, but to alleviate its affliction  
that it may be the less unmerciful.  
I shall illustrate this by a familiar instance &  
say, If you ask some men, why they take such  
pains to lay up money, their answer is, that they  
do it against the time of sickness or old age  
or good; But what is the meaning then, that they  
are so provident in such cases, cannot look  
little further, and provide for the time of Death,  
which is the next thing to age & sickness, and  
then, very often, comes before them. Again,

Again; were you in a decayed house, decayed so as  
to be every Day in danger of having it fall upon  
yr Heads, you wd surely look out some other  
habitation as well for yrself or Families; or  
were your Dwelling never so convenient, firm  
and good, yet would you, of having no Gran in  
it, but liable to be thrown out at a minute's  
warning, certainly have an eye upon some  
other. That this House of our Body is decayed  
and ruinous, and besides this, that we have no  
certain Time in it, you will readily grant;  
how is it then, that you look not out for some  
other habitation against the Time you may  
be compelled to leave these; that since your  
being is so uncertain, at least you remove  
st some of yr goods, and secure part w<sup>t</sup> however  
may happen to the Rest; lest on a sudden you  
should be forced thence, and obliged immediately to  
go away destitute, or while you stay to removal  
of goods, your tottering Dwelling fall upon yr  
Heads, and bury you together in one Grav<sup>m</sup>?  
To conclude; let us ever bear in our minds  
this great important Truth, that we must certain  
one Day, how soon wd know not, go down into  
the grave, the Center to which all men are tending.  
It is also remember, that as it is appointed unto  
m<sup>t</sup> once to die, so after this will be the Judgment  
of the Son of man shall come in the glory of his  
father, with his Angels, and shall reward every  
man according to his works. Let us have

already

We cannot indeed understand the manner  
of his generation; This is among the secret  
things which belong to God; This is knowledge  
too excellent for us; we cannot attain to it.  
It is enough, abundantly enough for us to know  
that God, the first Person of the Holy Trinity, is  
the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he  
by nature is the begotten of the Father; that to  
none else but God the Fa.<sup>r</sup> this Paternity belongs  
and to none else but God the Son, this Filiation  
belongs. Instead of entering into difficult Specula-<sup>tions</sup>  
and perplexing ourselves & others with curious  
disquisitions, it is far better for us to effect our  
salv's with a warm & vigorous sense of this  
comfortable Truth, That God is the Father of our  
Lord Jesus Christ; and be thereby induced to bless  
him, who is the Spring of so much happiness to us  
by being the Parent of so blessed a Son; a Son  
in whom by a voice from Heav'n, he declared  
himself to be well pleased; whom according to his  
own purpose & grace, in the fulness of Time he  
sent forth from his own Bosom to take our mortal  
nature upon him, & be born of a pure virgin, in  
order to reveal his will to mankind, to give  
knowledge of salvation to his people for the  
promission of their Sins, to give light to them  
that sat in darkness & in the shadow of death,  
and to guide their feet into the way of peace.  
Our Son, thro' whose all-sufficient merits we are  
entitled to an access to God, & in the Father, and  
the inestimable privilege of adoption, and  
becoming the Sons of God, and if Sons, then Heirs,  
Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ.  
The

The mother of our Lord, filled with Joy & Transport,  
declared concerning herself, from henceforth all  
generations shall call me blessed; and shall a less  
obsequious office be performed to his Father? Shall  
not all generations, all men in those successive  
generations call him blessed? If we honour him  
who descended from the height of majesty, and came  
down from Heaven, not to do his own will, but the  
will of him that sent him, shall we not honour  
the Father by whom he was sent? Shall we not  
a grifice the love of God towards us, which was  
manifested in this, because that God sent his only  
begotten Son into the world, that we might live thro'  
him? And if it was predicted of Christ, that all things  
should fall down before him, all nations do him service  
with united voices, call him blessed. Shall less  
attention of blessing be paid to his eternal Father?  
Secondly, another reason why we ought to bless God,  
because he is the Father of mercies. Mercy is his  
true offspring; he challenges that as proper to  
himself; he delights, he glories, he triumphs in the  
exercise of it, he is not only a merciful God, but  
God of numerous & manifold mercies: But above  
all; how did he abound towards us in the riches of  
mercy, by sending his Son into the world, for us  
men & for our salvation, to seek us w<sup>m</sup> we had  
no astray, to redeem us w<sup>m</sup> we were utterly lost  
& sold to work wickedness, to lay down his life  
for us, w<sup>m</sup> we were dead in trespasses & sins,  
made us partakers of the means of grace in this  
world, and the blissful effects of glory in the next!

The Redemption of mankind by our Lord Jesus Christ, with its happy consequences, is such an unbound'd  
of mercy, which human measure or can by no means  
estimate, which human thoughts can by no means  
comprehend, and which could only flow from the  
boundless Compassions of our gracious God.  
Filled with a lively sense of the divine mercies  
towards him, the Royal Prophet with admiration  
and amazement cries out, Lord what is man  
that thou hast such respect unto him; or the son  
of man, that thou do regardest him?

Thirdly, another reason why we ought to bless  
God is, because he is the God of all comfort.  
Our blessed Lord had told his Disciples, that upon  
his departure from them into Heaven, they shd  
endure much trouble, shd be persecuted, delivered  
up to bonds & imprisonment, to death itself for  
his name'sakes. But he bids them be of good  
cheer; he opens to them an agreeable prospect  
of a blessed Comforter, who shd support their drooping  
spirits, to always present with them, and endue  
them with a firmness of mind that no afflictions  
shd shake & discompose. Accordingly, they  
became new men; they were animated with  
unusual courage & resolution; they preached  
before the killers of Earth, their suffering masters  
and were not ashamed of one, nor afraid of the  
torments of the other. They were troubled on every  
side, but not distressed; perplexed, but not in  
despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down  
but not destroyed. Agreeably here to the blessed

Martyrs and Confessors amidst their shame, anguish  
and cruel treatment, had still the bright irradiation  
of comfort from on high, and the vital influence of  
God's favour & acceptance shower'd down upon  
them. And the same inward consolations which  
were dispensed for the support of Christians, in the  
days of persecution, are still vouchsafed to all  
true believers with regard to their sorrows &  
troubles, whether temporal or spiritual; to  
strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble  
knees; to dispel the fears, to revive the spirit of  
the humble, and to reinvigorate the heart of the  
outraged ones; to make them hear of joy & gladness,  
such as the world, with all its smiles & flatteries,  
cannot give, nor with all its terrors take away;  
to make them not content in the dispensations  
of Providence, how contrary soever to flesh & blood,  
and cheerfully resign themselves to the Divine will;  
and w<sup>m</sup> their dissolution draws nigh, devoutly  
summon their spirits into the hands of their faithful  
Creator, who is the strength of their heart and  
will be their portion for ever. Justly therefore  
say we day with the Apostle, Blessed be God,  
the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in  
all our tribulations. Having thus briefly considered  
the duty of blessing God, I now proceed, in a manner,  
by most persons, God is not blessed, and how he  
may be blessed, as also who they are, that discharge  
his duty aright. There is a sort of men, who have  
in their thoughts indeed, but it is only to dishonour  
and blaspheme his name; a name, w<sup>m</sup> they employ  
instead

instead of using it as great, wonderful & holy, to  
furnish out matter for their light profane discourse  
and bring down God from the highest Heaven to  
witness that, wch they woud be ashamed to call a  
sober man to add to. How ill, how monstrous  
is the return for all the bitter sufferings, the  
wounds & bloodshedding of the Son of God for  
the Sons of men, w<sup>t</sup> they shall have no other  
use made of them, but to be the subject of  
oaths & dreadful execrations! And how can  
the presumptuous sinner, in his last extremity  
call upon that God to bless & save him, whom  
he hath a thousand times before, upon every, upon  
no occasion, called upon to confound and  
damn his soul? These are open & notorious  
violations of the duty of blessing God: There is  
another sort of men of equal guilt, tho' cloath'd  
with a fairer outside than the other: These are they  
who have the form of godliness, but are destitute  
of its power; who amidst their soft & flattering  
words are full of guile & bitterness within.  
Thus we see that this duty, however easy it may  
appear, is by many slighted & violated. Indeed it  
is not every one that can say with affection  
and from the heart, blessed be God! Every  
wicked man, whose intent is it, that there  
shod be no God in Heaven, no righteous Judge to  
try the heart & knee, & give to every man  
according to his works, I say, ~~saying~~ such men  
are so far from being willing that God shod be blessed  
that they most earnestly desire, most passionately, wish  
that there were no God at all.

Having,

Having seen in what manner, and by what persons, God  
is not blessed, let us now see how he may be  
blessed and who they are that rightly & duly perform  
this duty. First, we bless God w<sup>m</sup> sincerely, and  
from the ground of the heart, we acknowledge  
him the sole author of all the good we enjoy,  
and offer him Thanksgiving & Praise for all the  
benefits we have receiv'd at his hands.

Blessing & praising God, are terms of equal  
importance; Thus David breaketh forth into those  
epturous strains: I will extol thee O<sup>r</sup> King,  
and will bless thy name for ever & ever.

As for that glory, which God receives from the  
praises & acknowledgements of man, we must  
confess that such are below the infinite height of  
his unbounded Essence; his state is unchangeable,  
so way capable of any new addition of honour  
from the best of our Services. Yet are they  
pleasing & acceptable to his divine Majesty—  
but for our Sakes only, & not for his; insomuch  
as we thereby endeavour to answer the gracious  
& Design of his bestowing his Favors upon  
us, and act as becomes grateful creatures, over  
whom he rejoiceth to do us good. Full therefore  
is a true sense of his unspeakable goodness, we  
will bless the glorious name of God, which is  
above all blessing & praise: we will summon  
all our powers & faculties to give him Thanks,  
holly David did, Bless the Lord O my soul, and  
that is within me, bless his holy name.

At this it the way almost power & energy of our

nature, appears from hence; that the blessed souls  
of saints made perfect, and equal to angels, have  
that angelical office for their great employment  
and honour, receiving new & fresh felicities,  
and as duly acknowledging their just recompence  
of them. They kept not day & night, saying,  
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, wch was, and  
is, and is to come. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to  
receive glory, hon' & power, for thou hast  
created all things, and for thy pleasure they  
are & were created. <sup>Secondly,</sup> We may bless  
God in his name; w<sup>m</sup> we take it with fear and  
reverence, acknowledge & declare it to be holy  
and speak not of it but with due apprehension  
of its transcendent excellency; <sup>respecting</sup> w<sup>m</sup> according  
to our ~~blessed~~<sup>abilities</sup>, we sincerely & zealously  
endeavour, that it may, more <sup>bd</sup> blessedly dealt  
with, & honored by others, that it may be glorious  
above all the world; that it may be called upon  
by all nations, and become the praise of the  
ends of the earth. <sup>Thirdly,</sup> Every transaction  
of our lives is to bear a part in it. And as  
the Apostle observed, whether you eat or drink  
or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.  
In a word, in order to the faithful discharge  
of this duty of blessing God, there must be the  
employment of the whole man in all his  
relations; we must study to approve ourselves  
to him, by a cheerful submission to his Providence  
an unfeigned Piety & uniform obedience to his law,  
by Temperance & Sobriety, chastity, in reference to  
our selves; by Justice, Truth & universal charity to our  
neighbours.

This was the very Design, & primary End of the  
Gospel Dispensation: The grace of god saith  
st Paul, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared  
to all men; teaching us, that we having denied  
ing godliness & worldly lusts, we shd live soberly,  
righteously, and godly in this present world;  
looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious  
returning of the great god & our Sav<sup>r</sup>. jesus  
christ, who gave himself for us, that he  
might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify  
unto himself a peculiar people zealous of  
good works. Let us therefore fit ourselves  
& purity of life, for this ~~most~~ pure & sacred  
work of blessing god. Let us lift up our  
thankful hearts to him, & show forth his  
ways, not only in our lips but in our lives,  
giving up ourselves to his service, and  
walking before him in holiness and  
righteousness all our days: that so, having  
in the best manner, and by all the ways our  
condition in this world is capable of, blessed  
ad <sup>Lord</sup> & gl<sup>r</sup> of our great Christ, the Je<sup>r</sup> of  
mercy, & the god of all comfort w<sup>t</sup> it now  
our duty, may hereafter become our accompa-  
nied w<sup>t</sup> us with Angels & Archangels and  
the company of thos<sup>r</sup> "for ever ascribed blessing  
god, & be for ever blessed with the glorious vision  
him, who is the fountain of all happiness, in  
whose fav<sup>r</sup> it life, in whose presence is fulness  
of joy, & at whose right hand are pleasures for ever  
more.

St Michael Royal on College-Hill 12<sup>th</sup> Augt. 1743.  
Ludgate 1<sup>st</sup> April - £1.  
St Michael Royal 27 July - £1.  
St Thomas's Hospital 25 July - £1.  
Ludgate 6 August 1743.  
St Michael Royal Sept 1743.  
Eastmondsey 12 Jan: - £5





But to return. Together with the general Rules of their Duty, these Children are taught such other Knowledge, as may qualify them for Employments fitted to their Station: and then disposed of to such Employments; with a farther Assistance, where it is requisite, of some little Matter to set out with, towards gaining a Livelihood. And this also surely must be of publick Benefit. Were they indeed either taken or kept away from other Busines, more useful, or in which Hands are more wanted; were they raised, without visible Merit, above their original Rank, into one of less Labour or more Knowledge, to the Prejudice of those who were by Birth their Superiors: Such Things would be just Objections, though not to the Institution of these Schools, yet to the Management of them. But when only the Parents are kept from Distress, and the Children from Idleness or wicked Courses; when Care is taken, to chuse them from a Condition suitable to what they are designed for; and neither in their manner of living, nor their Instruction, to set them above that: Every one will allow, it would be excellent private Charity to do this for a Child; and why not as good publick Charity, to do it for many Children; since the greater the Number is, the less in Proportion the Expence?

The second Method of doing good, before us at present, is that of Hospitals for the Sick. And whatever Objections may be made against other

Benefactions to the Poor, there can be none against restoring Ease and Health to them : against giving them those Helps which their distressed Families cannot give ; and enabling them to be useful again to themselves, and to the Publick. Now Hospitals are infinitely the best Means to this necessary End. They are a sure Way of detecting Counterfeits : they preserve the Sick from unskilful Hands : they are so many publick Schools, where the Knowledge of Medicine is taught, in the most effectual manner, for the common Benefit of Mankind. They relieve many such, as Parishes may not think themselves bound to relieve : and they do it, beyond Comparison, in the surest, the speediest, and the cheapest manner that can be. So that, were we to suppose even great Mismanagements in Hospitals ; they would still remain preferable to all other Methods of providing for the Sick : and yet the Numbers and Characters of the Governors of all our present Hospitals, secure them, as far as may be, against any Mismanagement at all. Another Advantage is, that ever so little given to this kind of Charity hath its proportionable good Effect : and the Diseases and Accidents, which befall the lower Part of the World, are so many and frequent, that ever so much given, may easily be employed. Then it well deserves to be considered farther, that Sickness affords a favourable Opportunity for good Impressions : and therefore most important Service may be done to poor Creatures

tures in these Places, by shewing them from Experience the bad Consequences of vicious Lives, and the good ones of Regularity ; by giving them strong Impressions of the Excellency of Compassion and Mercy, at the Time they are partaking of it ; and awakening them to a Sense of what their Condition requires of them, and their eternal Happiness depends upon. But the Benefit of Hospitals hath been so very well explained to the World of late,\* and is so generally acknowledged ; that I need only add a Word concerning one Sort of them, That for the Diseased in Mind.

These poor Creatures are made by their Disorder, whilst it continues, intirely useless to Society : and many of them, at the same Time, exceeding miserable in themselves ; by the frightful, or the gloomy Train of Ideas, that possesses their Minds ; and the vehement Passions, that so frequently agitate them. Now when Persons in low Circumstances fall into this unhappy State, as many of them do ; their Friends are more incapable of taking Care of them, than in any other Case whatever : and there is no Way of attempting their Cure, which can possibly be attended with such Hope of Success, as placing them in Hospitals appropriated to this Purpose. And even when there appears no Prospect of a Cure at all, to provide

\* See Dr. Alured Clarke's Sermon, before the Governors of the County-Hospital at *Winchester* : and an Account of the Establishment of that Hospital, published last Year.

for them as Incurables is a most useful and excellent Act of Humanity: and the Beginnings lately made, of a Provision of this Sort, well deserve Encouragement, and peculiarly want it.

The only Kind of Charity, which remains to be spoke to now, is that of Houses of Correction and Work for the Dissolute and Idle. The Terror these Places strike, is one great Benefit: as it prevents at once, both Crimes and the Consequences of them. But where that proves ineffectual, the next Advantage of such Houses is, that Offenders can be immediately secured in them: removed out of the Way of endangering the Properties, the Lives, the Virtue of others; and made to feel, that their Attempts of gaining a Livelihood by easier Methods than honest People do, shall only subject them to harder Labour, and deserved Punishment. Many of them, we are assured, have been brought by these Means to a just Sense of their Interest and their Duty. Very many more, we have sad Experience, much need to have this Kindness done them. And we cannot but know the Importance, both to them and to ourselves, of checking the Growth of Wickedness, before it is quite too late to think of attempting it.

These then being the Methods of Charity now before you; consider well what Obligations you are under, as Stewards of God for the Good of your Fellow-Creatures, to assist in directing and supporting them.

Such,

Such, in the first Place, as are qualified to govern and direct any of these Institutions, are bound in Conscience, not to let so excellent Designs receive Prejudice, for want of a Succession of fit Persons to put them in Execution. For a little Time may well be spared, both from Pleasure, and from Business of other Kinds ; to employ it in a manner, so productive of Happiness to the World, and to themselves. And such as have actually taken this good Work upon them, must ever remember, that they are now become Stewards of the Charity of Men, as well as the Bounty of God : and their Faithfulness in the Discharge of their Trust is engaged to both. They, whose constant Attendance cannot be expected, should at least acquaint themselves so far with the Management of Things ; as to know, and be able to assure others, that it is, in the main at least, such as it ought : for in many Cases, this alone may be a valuable Service. And all, who profess to enter farther into the Conduct of Affairs, should seriously, and frequently, and impartially consider, what can be reformed in these Charities, and what can be improved. A meddling Spirit, fond of disturbing Things that are well, either to no good Purpose, or none that can be obtained, is indeed a very mischievous one: but prudent, peaceable Endeavours, to make every Thing as perfect as it can be made, are of incredible Use. The Work you are engaged in, is a very important one: and a small Defect of Attention,

a little wrong Bias or mistaken Judgment, may produce exceeding unhappy Effects: may diminish considerably the Benefit of these excellent Designs, Rom.xiv.16. and make even *your Good evil spoken of*. The Support of voluntary Charities depends entirely on their Reputation: and therefore it concerns you greatly, to avoid, not only every Thing blameable, but <sup>2 Cor. xi. 12.</sup> every Thing suspicious; and to *cut off Occasion from them which desire Occasion to find Fault, providing for honest Things, not only in the Sight of the Lord, but in the Sight of all Men.* But more especially give me Leave to recommend to you, that as you are intrusted for the Good of your Fellow-Creatures, you would have great Regard to their eternal Good: and that, as you are employed for the Service of God, you would express your Concern for his Honour, by endeavouring conscientiously, to imprint a Sense of Religion and Virtue upon all that come under your Care in these Places. It is the Want of Religion and Virtue, that occasions this dreadful Number of Distresses and Disorders in the World: and so long as the Cause subsists, the Effect will follow. Let your Children therefore be carefully bred up to Piety, without Superstition or Uncharitableness; to Loyalty, and Honesty; to Humility, and Industry. Let your Sick be instructed and admonished, suitably to their Capacities, their present Condition, and past Behaviour. And let the Correction of your Offenders be made as medicinal as it can: and a charitable

ritable Care for reclaiming them, by proper Expostulations, and friendly Advice, be joined with whatever Severity it is necessary they should undergo. There are undoubtedly amongst them great Objects of Pity; Persons far from deserving to be despaired of: and surely these, as far as it is possible, should have some distinguished Regard shewn them. But so much Regard at least should be shewn to them all, and to the Publick at the same Time, if we have any Concern for its Welfare; as never to suffer Places appointed for the Punishment of Wickedness, to become Schools for learning it.

And now, having taken upon me to say thus much to you, it is but justice I should add, that Exhortations by no Means imply Distrust. *Having Confidence in thy Obedience,* faith St. Paul to Philemon, *I write unto thee, knowing, that thou wilt also do more than I say.* And never can there be better Ground for a Confidence of this Kind, than at present: when these Charities are conducted by so large a Number of good, and wise, and experienced Men, under the Inspection of a Magistracy so worthy of Honour; and over which presides a Person, whose uncommon Abilities we all see exercised every Day, for the Promotion of Religion and Virtue, of the Peace and good Order, the Welfare and Happiness of this great City, with the most exemplary Disinterestedness, and the truest

Prudence, the most active Zeal, and the tenderest Humanity.

I proceed therefore now, with great Satisfaction, from the Duty of managing these Charities well, to that of supporting them. And one Way of supporting them is, by speaking of them with the Esteem they deserve. These publick Institutions, and some of them more especially, have had great Accusations brought against them by many Persons. But stay to enquire, and hear, before you condemn. You may possibly judge wrong, concerning what ought to be done: and you may very probably be misinformed, concerning what is done. Things which have happened very seldom, if at all, may be spoke of to you as happening frequently. Mistakes corrected long ago, may be charged as continuing still. Inconveniences may be unjustly heightened: Advantages unjustly depreciated. Should this be so; and should the Things you are declaiming against, be all the while excellently good ones: think only, what Harm you are doing to Mankind. Perhaps indeed, nay certainly, they are not perfect. But are they not well? Or if not, cannot they be made so? If they can, use your Endeavours that they may. Shew a good Meaning, and you will acquire an Influence. But even should you after all be unsuccessful; still reflect a second Time: Is it not more eligible, that these Institutions should continue as they are, than fall to ruine. For, supposing some

better Way might be contrived; is there any Certainty, is there any Prospect, of this better Way being taken? And if not; never pull down, till you are likely to build again.

But affording good Words alone to Charity, is very insufficient. As faithful Stewards of the Divine Bounty, you must communicate of the Wealth also, which is placed in your Hands for that Purpose; *and minister, as of the Ability which* 1 Pet. iv. 11. *God giveth.* The Importance of supporting these Methods of doing Good, so far as it appears from their general Nature, you have already heard. But when you are acquainted also with their large and increasing Extent, and their necessary Dependance on new Benefactions every Year; these Things will be weighty additional Motives to your Liberality: and I intreat your compassionate Attention to the following Report of them.

*Here the Report was read.*

Y O U have now heard the most forcible Arguments you well can hear, for contributing plentifully to the Charities before you. Eight hundred Vagrants and disorderly Persons, confined and employed, relieved and corrected, for their own Reformation, and your Security: Thirteen Hundred poor Children maintained, taught their Duty to God and Man, and qualified for Usefulness to the Publick: Thirteen Thousand sick Persons,  
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taken Care of in their Sicknes. And these excellent Establishments, you perceive at the same Time, cannot subsist without continual Help: though, would but your Bounty afford the Means for it, they are capable of being greatly enlarged. There are still Multitudes of poor Children very insufficiently provided for: and no small Part of them either taught or reduced to get a Livelihood by Wickednes and Dishonesty. Still too many Offenders of more advanced Years, infest your Streets. And a very large Proportion of the Sick, that apply to your Hospitals, are forced to be rejected and left in their Misery, for want of Room to receive them, or Income to support them. Think then what is incumbent on you in relation to these Things.

There are but two Reasons, and they are both very bad ones, that hinder Men from being charitable according to their Power: Either Covetousnes makes them unwilling; or Expensivenes makes them imagine they are unable.

If the former influences you; consider well, that your Happiness for ever depends on doing your Duty: but your Happiness even here doth not depend on enlarging your Fortunes. You may, if you will form yourselves to it, enjoy great Satisfaction in doing good. But what Felicity can you possibly find, either in the Consciousnes of having, or the Vanity of being known to have, ever so much Wealth more than you have any Occasion

for? And besides, if the Enjoyment of *Man's Life* Luke xii. 15., did consist in the Abundance of the Things which he possessed: Charity may often be so contrived by Prudence, as not to diminish Wealth; and is often so blessed by Heaven, as greatly to increase it. I am sensible you have heard these Things, till you have brought yourselves by Degrees to be very little moyed by them: but remember, God will expect, that having been reminded of them so frequently, you should regard them the more.

And if it be Expensiveness that with-holds you from Charity; in this Case also think with yourselves: for which Purpose is it, your Maker hath intrusted you? For Vices and Follies, or for Pity and Mercy? You may indeed plead, that Luxury, by the Numbers it employs, is perhaps the most extensive Beneficence. But this is a poor Pretence, evidently calculated to make yourselves easy in acting wrong. Undoubtedly the Wisdom of Providence hath contrived, that many who will do no Good in any other Way, shall, however, do some in this. But then it is usually done to those who need it least. A Number of Persons, well able to take Care of themselves otherwise, are maintained Part in Idleness, Part in Professions of no manner of Use; whilst the true Objects of Compassion, the Infirm and Helpless, are left unregarded to suffer and perish. Luxury therefore contributes nothing to answer the Intent of the Charities before us. And even those it doth provide for, it teaches

at

at the same Time to ruin themselves by the Imitation of it. And in Proportion as it prevails, it destroys every where, both Virtue and Happiness, publick and private. But the numberless Evils of this most fatal Vice cannot be enlarged on now: and if the very little Good it doth, were very much more, yet, as no one will pretend to say, that Good was the Motive to his Expensiveness; it can never be a Defence of it. We must not therefore think, to make our Extravagance an Excuse for the Defect of our Alms: or hope in the least to mend our Plea, by calling those Things Necessaries of Life, which are indeed very blameable Superfluities.

Let therefore both the frugal and the expensive Man seriously consider, one, what Proportion his Charity bears to his Increase; the other to his Profusions: and each think of justifying themselves, not to the World, but to God.

Possibly it may seem a good Reason to some, for their own Neglect of the Poor; that the Law makes Provision for them. And it is certainly an Honour to the Law, that it doth: but no Honour to us, that it needs do it. Besides, there are very many Cases of great Distress, to which legal Provision is neither easily, nor properly extended: nor can it give by any Means so plentiful Relief as should be given, to the greater Part of those to whom it may extend. But suppose the Law capable of doing every Thing that needs be done: what would

would be the Consequence of leaving every Thing to it? That we should lose intirely the Means we have now, of proving to the World, and to ourselves, the Goodness of our own Hearts; and of making an undoubted Free-will Offering to God, out of what he hath given us. Persons of bad Minds may indeed take Occasion to neglect the Poor, from our Willingness to relieve them: and thus by their Fault, the Burden may fall heavier upon us than it ought. But then God who hath intrusted us, not only in Conjunction with others to do our Share, but separately by ourselves to do what we can, *is not unrighteous to forget this our Labour of Love*: but will take abundant Care that whatever we bear chearfully on his Account, far from giving us Cause of Complaint, shall assuredly be Matter of great Joy to us in the End.

Think then attentively of these Considerations. They are not proposed to you, for raising a sudden Warmth of Affection, and serving a present Turn : it is to your coolest Reason this Address is made. Reflect in Retirement on what you have heard. Act upon deliberate Conviction, act from a settled Principle in what you do : from that sublime Principle, which St. Peter directs to in the next Verse after the Text ; *that God may be glorified in all Things, through Jesus Christ* : That you may express to Him your Sense of the Duty and Gratitude you owe him ; that you may improve your own Hearts, by imitating the Goodness you honour ;

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Rev. iii. 2.

2 Cor. ix. 12.

that you may convince Mankind of the Excellency of the Christian Doctrine. Consider yourselves, in this View also, as the Stewards of God: as intrusted for the Service and Promotion of his Gospel. For be assured, such important and astonishing Truths as that comprehends, and you have lately heard out of it, were not made known to you, with a Design you should be indifferent about them; but deeply affected by them yourselves, and seriously diligent to engage the Attention of others to them. If then you have any Zeal for the Faith you profess, as Heaven knows there never was more need: shew Men, by its Effects, what it is; and give Demonstration to the World, how far the true Charity of a good Christian goes beyond the boasted Benevolence of Unbelievers. Invite Men by this Means to a better Opinion of Religion: encourage them by the same to a steadier Practice of it. *Be watchful and strengthen*, by every Method you can, *the Things which remain and are ready to die*: but particularly make Provision in these excellent Ways, which are now proposed to you, for the Instruction of the Ignorant, the Conversion of the Vicious, the Spiritual Improvement, as well as Temporal Relief of the Sick: that so *the Administration of your Charity may not only supply the Want of the Saints, but be abundant also by many Thanksgivings unto God*.

F I N I S.

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